9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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796
184 come off, therefore, either in the latter part of Kumbham or in the former part of the next following month of Meenam according as the new moon in Kumbham occurs earlier or
796 later. The festival is said to be celebrated in commemora-
184 tion of the victory obtained by the local deity, Bhadrakali,
773 widely known by the local designation of Chittur Bhagavati,
776 in a battle fought with the Kongans, the people of what was known in ancient days as the 'Kongu Desam' comprising the localities included in the present British District of Coimbatore, and lying to the north and east of the Chittur Taluk. The final engagement was fought in the eastern out-skirts of the present town of Chittur, and in it the Kongu chief called in the old songs by the simple name of 'Kongan' was slain by the Goddess with her own hand. The place of engagement is now marked by a small extent of rocky surface, on which is cut the figure of the Bhagavati's sword with which Kongan's head was cut off. The rock also shows two holes nearly a foot in depth, and six inches in diameter. These holes are pointed out by old people as having been made by the hoofs of the fore-legs of the Kongan's mount, which is described as a magnificent buff-bull, when the animal jumped on to the rock in the excitement caused by the fall of its master from its back slain by the Goddess. The buff-bull was also slain on the spot. The whole of the Kongu army was completely routed, and all stampeded to their country in utter confusion. In the course of the battle a few men on the side of the Bhagavati were also killed or wounded, among whom were four important persons belonging to four ancient families in Chittur, who appear to have been the leaders of the local militia. The dead bodies of these four and the wounded were taken from the field of battle and carried to the town and handed over to the respective families, the procession being led by the Goddess, who afterwards commanded the people to celebrate the victory every year, and after
173 entering the temple disappeared into her image within. Tra-
796 dition speaks thus of the origin of the war. The wealth of the
184 'Kongu Desom' chiefly consisted of chillies, turmeric, coriander, cumin seed, mustard, areca nut, etc. These commodities
[439] used to be exported for sale, in return for paddy, from Kongu
[492] Desom to Chittur, Palghat, and other places in large quantities

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laden on the backs of mules, asses, bullocks and buffaloes. 796
When once a large caravansary of Kongu laden with such com- 184
modities was passing through Chittur, the people of the four [439]
desams of Chittur, *viz.*, Chittur, Nallepilli, Tattamangalam, [492]
and Pattancheri, robbed the Kongans of all their animals and goods. The chief of Kongu, on receiving the information, naturally felt indignant, and despatched an ultimatum to the *Pramánakkars* of Chittur, demanding the surrender of the animals and the articles, failing which, it was said, he would overrun the four *desams*, destroy the houses, and kill all people even including women and children. On receiving the ultimatum, the people went to the temple of the Goddess, and there read the document before the image of the Goddess. It was so read by a member of the Chittedath house, in whose custody, it is said, the original document, written in a copper plate, is still preserved. The reading of the ultimatum, transcribed in a piece of cadjan, before the Bhagavati, is one of the essential functions performed on the night of the Kongapada festival every year, and it is always done by a member of the Chittedath family, who dresses himself up in the fashion of a Kongan and acts the part of the Kongu chief. When the document [776]
was read and the people prayed to their Goddess in one voice for protection, the Goddess commanded from within the temple that her 'children' need not fear and that when the Kongan took steps to enforce his ultimatum, she would protect them. On receiving no reply to the ultimatum, the Kongan mobilized his men and crossed the Walayar river, the northern boundary of the Chittur Taluk. The information about the crossing of the [314]
boundary was first carried to the Chitturians by the Izhuvans [273]
of the vicinity, who were up the palmyra trees early in the morning for the purpose of tapping for toddy, and they in a body climbed down the trees, and without removing their breast protecting leather straps, tapping knives, mallets and ladders, ran to the four *desams* all in excitement. In view [564]
of the above fact, the advance portion of the day procession of the Kongapada festival is even to this day made up of a number of persons, mostly of the Chetti caste, belonging to the four *desams*, dressed up in the full toddy-tapping kit of the Izhuvans. They do so every year in pursuance of religi- [782]
ous vows made by them for the attainment of particular

Chapter 3

Animal Husbandry

23 ANIMAL HUSBANDRY IN Kerala is poorly developed. It stands in sharp contrast to the well-developed agricultural sector. With the exception of poultry, low livestock productivity marks all aspects of animal husbandry. The milk yield in the State [234] is among the lowest in the country. The total production of milk in Kerala in 1956 has been estimated at 1.82 lakh tons,[1] which works out to a per capita production of 1.3 ozs. as against the minimum of 10 ozs. per capita recommended by the Nutritional Advisory Committee of the Indian Council of Medical Research. This is also true [439] of yield of meat from sheep and goat. Consequently, the contribution of animal husbandry to the State income is comparatively low. During 1957-58 the net contribution of livestock to State income was Rs. 12.2 crores, that is, only 3.3 per cent of the State income while for all-India it was about 8 per cent.

Livestock Population

231 3.2 According to the 1956 Census of livestock, Kerala had a total livestock population of 4,168,000. This consisted of 2,510,000 cattle; 4,88,000 buffaloes; 97,820 [171] sheep; 113,711 pigs; 956,000 goats, fowls and ducks. The number of cows and she-buffaloes in milk per thousand of human population was very low at 30, while the same was as high as 148 in Madhya Pradesh, 123 in Punjab, 150 in Rajasthan (all-India 80). Other major heads of livestock in the same year were sheep (97,820) and pigs (113,711).

3.3 In 1956 there were 838,000 working cattle in the State (Table 20). The significant fact about this is the high proportion of buffaloes to the total working cattle. The buffaloes constituted about one-third of the draught animals. The correspond- [492] ing all-India proportion in the same year was only 9 per cent. Buffaloes are popular in Kerala as draught animals, because of their superior draught capacity and greater suitability for the puddled type of cultivation. This has an important bearing on the formulation of the future breeding policy.

3.4 Between the Census of 1951 and 1956 the livestock population rose by over 17 per cent in the State as against only 4.8 per cent for the entire country. There has been an all round increase under all the major heads except pigs (—3.6%) and sheep [114] (—77%). A large increase in the livestock and poultry population may be partly due to a higher level of reporting in the Census of 1956 over the previous Census.

[113] [1] *Indian Livestock Statistics*, 1953-54 to 1955-56, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of India.